A VINDICATION OF THE Ministers OF CHRIST FROM

That Slander cast on them, that they Are HOUSE-CREEPERS, because they sometimes Preach in private Houses.

ALSO

Proving by the Scripture who are *House-Creepers*, and the evil they do where their corrupt Doctrine is Received.

Held forth in two SERMONS on 2 *Tim.* 3. 6.

By *W. E.*

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2 PET. 2. *But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, which shall privily bring in damnable Heresies.*

VER 2. *And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by whom the Way of Truth shall be evil spoken of.*

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To the Reader.

THESE are to assure Thee, that the Author of this ensuing Discourse, never intended it for the Press, being sensible of his own weakness. But by Providence it is thus brought about: He being desired by some friends to open this Scripture in 2 Tim. 3.6. This Text being made use of by some to discourage Persons from attending the Ordinances of God in private places; Although through the great Mercy of God, and the favour of the King, they cannot properly be called private Places, since the Places are appointed by Authority, and it is free for any to come unto them; They make use of this Scripture to scare the weak from coming thither, suggesting unto them, that those who preach in such places are the Persons that the Apostle here calls Creepers into Houses, and the same that he calls ver. 13. wicked men and deceivers: And this Scripture they make use of as the Great Engine to batter down all such Assemblies.

This ensuing Discourse is to shew, who were those that the Apostle here calls House-creepers; And that they have not this denomination given them on this account, because they did preach in Houses, for it was the frequent Practices of this and the rest of the Apostles, yea, of Christ himself.

But it was because these here spoken of did chuse private Places, to the end that they might steal the hearts of the simple from the truth, and their wiles might not be discerned, yea, those who under the pretence of truth, with fair words beguile the hearts of the simple, are the same with those the Apostle here calls House-creepers, although they appear in publick Places.

This being a subject seldom treated of, some having taken the Notes of the Discourse, were very earnest to send it to the Presse, which the Author was unwilling should be done: But this Argument prevailed with him to give his Consent; Hoping that some Person whom the Lord hath endowed with spiritual Gifts and Learning, might from hence be provoked to put forth his Abilities, for the further clearing up this Truth, viz. The Lawfulness of Assembling together to wait on God in his Ordinances, in such Places, which some by way of scorn call

private Places; *And that those Ministers who do endeavour faithfully to perform their duty in such Places, are not of those who are here condemned by the* Apostle, *but such as did follow the Example of Christ and his* Apostles; *that so those that are weak might not be affrighted by such Bug-bears: If any shall receive benefit by these weak Endeavours, Give the glory to the* Lord, *to whom alone it is due, that hath enabled so weak a Creature to speak a word for the truth, that is so much despised by many; the* Lord *make it a good word to the Souls of his People. This is the earnest desire and hearty* Prayer *of Him who wisheth Peace and Prosperity to all the Churches of God.*

Farewel.

16 MA 61

2 TIM. 3. 6.

For of this Sort are they which creep into Houſes, and lead Captive ſilly Women with divers luſts.

THE Apoſtle in the Beginning of the Chapter, by the Spirit of Prophecy doth foretel, That the laſt days ſhall be perillous and full of danger; and then what is the reaſon of it, as you may ſee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *For men ſhall be Lovers of their own ſelves, Covetous, Boaſters, &c.* So that there are in it theſe two things Conſiderable.

1. That in the laſt dayes there ſhall be perillous times.

2. That the reaſon of ſuch perillous times is, becauſe men abound in ſin and wickedneſs; Whence obſerve by the way,

That abundance of iniquity makes Perillous Times. This is very clear in the Scriptures. You may ſee, that when Holineſs doth increaſe, and Perſons make it their buſineſs to walk according to Gods Word, at ſuch times there is happineſs and great Bleſſings vouchſafed unto a people. So on the other Hand, when people Apoſtatize and fall from God, then uſually ſuch times are full of danger. It was a time full of danger with *Iſrael*,

when ſin and wickedneſs abounded among them, and they departed from God, and apoſtatized from the purity of his worſhip *Judg.* 2. 14. 15. *ch.* 3. v 8. 12. *ch.* 4. v. 1. 2. *ch.* 6. v. 1. 2. 3. 4 5. 6. *Pſal.* 16. 4. When people turn aſide from God and ſet up their own luſts, they ſhall have ſorrow enough. And again, when people make it their buſineſs to walk with God, all things proſper with them.

2. *Chron.* 13. 3. 4. 5. 10. 11. 12. The like you have in the dayes of *Hezekiah*, 2 *Chron.* 29. but when men forſake the Commandments of the Lord, and walk contrary to him, God hath a controverſy with ſuch a land. It is the abundance of iniquity that makes times perillous. I ſhall give you two reaſons of it.

1. Times are uſually full of danger when iniquity abounds, becauſe God uſually appears againſt ſuch a people.

2. Becauſe when iniquity abounds, people allow themſelves to walk after their own luſts, they are ready to break out into any wickedneſs: there is nothing within them to reſtrain them, but they are ready to do whatſoever their baſe hearts prompt them to, though it be never ſo groſſely prejudicious to mens eſtates, lives, or liberties. I might much enlarge here: But I ſhall ſpeak no further to this.

You have ſeen the dependence of the text, on the foregoing words. Now ſaith the text, *For of this*

ſort

ſort are they that creep into houſes. Of what ſort? of the ſort here mentioned, ſuch has had a form of godlineſs, but denyed the power thereof.

The Apoſtle ſpeaketh not of ſuch that were heathens, that had no knowledge of God, and made no profeſſion of religion, but of ſuch as profeſſed God, and that they were the friends of God. For, ſaith the text (*having a form of godlineſs*) they had a form of godlineſs, but they denyed the power thereof: They pretended much for Chriſt and the waies of Chriſt, but denyed that which was the main, *viz.* a full ſubmiſſion of themſelves to Chriſt, to walk according to the rules of Chriſt.

Now every particular of this might clearely be proved concerning the Antichriſtian power, the myſtery of iniquity, and thoſe that are plunged into it. The text ſaith, they have a form of Godlineſs, and have not theſe? Do not they pretend much for Chriſt? when none do oppoſe him more. Are not they lovers of pleaſures, more then lovers of God? May it not be clearly demonſtrated, that notwithſtanding their pretences for Chriſt, they ſtand in open oppoſition againſt him in all his Offices? As firſt for his prophetical office, they are ſo far from hearkning to the voice of Chriſt, that they ſet up their own inventions in the place thereof, preferring them before his inſtitutions.

They obey not Christ as the great Prophet so that if those, on whom they urge their institutions, should demand, *What Word of God have you for these things?* They would return nothing but scoffs.

Again, as for Christs Priestly Office, what a dishonour is it to Christ, that they make their unbloody sacrifice of the Altar to be a Propitiation for the sins of men?

And as for Christs Kingly Office, they have no regard to the Authority of Christ, nor to the Rule that he hath appointed for the Government of the Church, nor have they any respect to the Spirit of God, but make a mock of him, though it be so clear in the Scripture, *Rom.* 8.9,14. They are so far from walking according to the Word of God, that they walk contrary to it: so far from subduing their sinful pollutions, that they endeavor by all means to cherish them, maintaining their own Works of Prayer, Charity, Devotions, as meritorious, they pretend much honour to the Cross of Christ, but on every trivial occasion make nothing to swear by his blood and wounds: they pretend much to Prayer, Reading with hands and eyes lifted up; yet how far are they from that spiritual zeal and fervour of affection, that is necessarily requisite in Prayer, *Having a Forme of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.*

Now

Now, *of this ſort are they that creep into Houſes, leading Captive ſilly Women*, &c. under the pretence of being for God, they deceive people, and draw them into pernicious errours.

Leading Captive ſilly Women. They uſually aſſault ſuch, becauſe by reaſon of the weakneſs of their ſex and underſtanding, they are not able to diſcern their wiles and ſubtilties. For obſerve, that it is not ſpoken generally of Women. But

1. *Silly Women.* Such as are ignorant of the Truth of God, that content themſelves with an outward profeſſion, not endeavouring to be firmly grounded and eſtabliſhed in the things of God.

2. Such as were laden with ſin, led away with divers luſts, that though they lived under a Profeſſion of Religion, and contented themſelves, becauſe they apprehended they had ſome deſires, or at leaſt ſome kinde of affection to the truth, yet they were under the power of their corruptions. Now ſuch that are wilfully captivated to their luſts, it is no wonder, if God ſuffer them in his juſt Judgment to be enſnared by thoſe that lie in wait to deceive them.

So that the Apoſtle means by *ſilly women* all ſuch, as either by reaſon of the weakneſs of their underſtanding, are not able to diſcern the wiles and craftineſs of deceivers, or ſuch as being under the power and dominion of ſome luſt,

God

God in his juſt judgment ſuffers to be enſnared by them. Thus you have the ſenſe of the words. *In* the words you have obſervable theſe things.

1. The perſons here ſpoken of, called by the Apoſtle, creepers into houſes. *viz.* falſe teachers.

The deſcription of them, *Of this ſort are they.* He ſheweth their evil qualities in the precedent verſes, *They are lovers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, curſed ſpeakers, without natural affection, truce-breakers, falſe accuſers, deſpiſers of them that are good. Traitours, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures more then lovers of God: Having a forme of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.* Of this ſort are they, ſaith he, as much as to ſay, this is a plain and full deſcription of them.

3. He ſheweth what ſad works theſe make where they creep into houſes, *they lead captive.*

4. The perſons that they prevaile on, *Silly women*, which is not to be underſtood only of that ſex, but perſons that are ſimple, void of underſtanding as to ſpiritual things whether men or women.

5. Theſe perſons that are thus led captive are more fully deſcribed by that corrupt ſtate they are in, *viz.* They are ſuch as are laden with ſin, ſuch as are under the power and dominion of ſome baſe luſt or luſts: Theſe are they who are made a prey of by them. Now here obſerve.

Doct:

Doct. 1. That men are not accounted these house creepers in the Scripture account, or in the account of the Apostle, because they do preach in houses or secret places: but when they get into such places, and there under the pretence of holiness make it their business secretly to draw such as are weak from the truth to error; and those who chuse such places to carry on their design, may justly be called creepers: yea, all that in their teaching carry on such a design under the pretence of holyness, although they preach in the most publick places, and in the greatest assemblies; yet in the Apostles sence here they are creepers.

Doct. 2. That such persons usually effect their design on such as are either weak and ignorant, not able to discern their corrupt and unsound doctrine; or such as are under the power of some base lust or lusts, be they men or women, (for it may be understood of both sexes) such being by the just judgment of God left to themselves, and so they easily prevaile on them.

For the proof of the first Doctrine, I shall give you several Scriptures, by which this shall appear. Consider that place *John* 10. 1. *He that climbeth in some other way, he that entereth not by the door is a thief and a robber.*

Now

Now the *Door* is Christ by which Men enter, when they are sent of Christ, (as certainly Christ sendeth none but such as hear his voice, none are his sheep but such as hear his voice) those then that come in, & not by Christ, may well be termed Creepers or Climbers up another way, *Gal.* 2. 2. We shall finde there, that the Apostle communicated the Gospel privately to them which were of Reputation; and it was by reason of the false brethren that crept in amongst them. So that those Persons are called Creepers, that under the pretence of Holiness draw people from the truth, of whom also the Apostle *Jude* speaketh, *Jude v.* 4.

Now for the better understanding hereof I shall shew you,

1. That in the Apostles judgement none were accounted House-creepers, because they did preach in private places.

2. That these are to be so accounted, that under a pretence of Holiness do seek to draw people from the truth; and those that do so, though never so publick, yet come under this Denomination.

1. That in the Apostles Judgment none were accounted House-creepers, because they did preach in private places; I call it private, in opposition to those places that were appointed for the publick Worship and Ordinances of God, as amongst

amongst the *Jews* there was the Temple and the Synagogues. Now you shall find, that it was the practice of Christ and his Apostles, not only in the Temple and Synagogue, but in divers other places to preach the Word. It was justified by Christ himself, *Mat.* 5. he preached on a Mountain, *Mat.* 13. 2. in a ship; and at another time he preached by the highway side, and by Jacobs-well to the *Samaritane* woman; *John* 4. and afterwards to the *Samaritans*, v. 40. 41, 42. And this was not only the practice of Christ, but of the Apostles afterwards, *John* 20. 19. 26. so that at both these times they were met together in a house. So *Acts* 1. 12, 13, 14. where it appears also, that they met together about the Ordinances of God; for it is said, *they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.* And so *Acts* 10. *Peter* preached at *Cornelius's* house, *Acts* 16. 13. *Paul* preached at the Rivers side, where God opened the heart of *Lydia.* And again at *Athens*, on the midst of *Mars-hill. Acts* 17. 17. 22. So you see, that it was the practice of Christ and his Apostles to preach in several places, whereso'ever Providence cast them. Hence we may safely conclude, That which was the Practice of Christ, and his Apostles afterwards, cannot be rationally supposed to be condemned by this expression of the Apostle, nor was it the Apostles intent, that persons should fall under the denomination of *house-creepers*, because they taught in private places, since it was used both by Christ and his Apostles. Nay, it is very remarkable and worthy of our observation, that the *Pharisees*, as captious as they were, did not (as we read) lay this as a

ſlaunder on Chriſt and his Apoſtles, for teaching in ſuch places.

2. That thoſe indeed are the perſons, whom the Apoſtle means, who putting on an outward ſhow and forme of holyneſs, under that deceive, and lead from the truth: Now this will evidently appear, if you view the words that we read unto you, in which the Apoſtle doth diſcover them.

1. That they were ſuch, that had a forme of godlineſs, *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof. For of this ſort, &c.*

2. They were ſuch that under the forme did deceive, by drawing from the truth. So that when men do purpoſely and out of choice take ſuch places, wherein they may carry on their pernicious deſigns, and lead perſons from the truth, theſe in the Scripture ſence, and the Apoſtles judgment are rightly termed houſe-creepers, as the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſaith, *Joh* 3. 20. *For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* Such then may be ſaid to be creepers, when they get to ſecret places, on purpoſe to avoid the light, that their deeds of darkneſs may not be diſcovered. It is beyond all doubt that the Apoſtle meaneth not of ſuch, that were forced and conſtrained to take ſuch places: but doubtleſs the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of thoſe falſe teachers, that had diffuſed their errours, and ſpread themſelves abroad amongſt the Churches of God, thinking pri-

privately to undermine them: there were some of them in *Corinth*, some in *Galatia*, some in *Philippi*, and *Coloss* also, and at several other places: and *Jude* speaketh of it to those to whom he wrote. Such were ready to say after this manner: What, will ye not observe the Commandments of God? Hath not the Lord expresly Commanded Circumcision, and the forbearance of such and such meates? Is not this the will of God? and so by such fair words, many were seduced and drawn away, not being able to discover the bottom of their designs. You may see, how notably the Apostle speaketh to the *Colossians*, *Col.* 2. 16. 17, 18. these men pretended much to holyness and humility, that they yeilded obedience to God, and had his law amongst them, but see what the Apostle saith, v. 20. *If then ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, if ye are partakers of the death of Christ, what have you to do with these things?* You may see, how the Apostle takes them off from these arguments, they reasoned thus: This the Law commandeth, therefore we ought to do it: Admit it did so, saith the Apostle, but now by the Death of Christ ye are free from these things; you are not commanded to forbear such and such meats, but of every creature you may receive: the abstinence from meates was typicall and figurative, but now you are taken off from these things: So that the argument hath a double force. If they plead the Law, saith the Apostle, ye are dead unto the law.

If they plead the practice of some that are wise men, saith the Apostle, *Yea are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world*, and then surely the traditions of men cannot bind you. You are freed from the Doctrines of men, (i.e.) such Doctrines that are not grounded upon the Word of God. So that there may be fair pretences and specious shews of holyness, when indeed there is no such thing. Now then it appears, that since this is not spoken of those, that do on some occasion or other preach in private places (for indeed it was the practice of Christ and his Apostles) it must be spoken of those that do out of voluntary choise take such places for the furtherance of their wicked designs, to entrap such that cannot discern their wiles. As for instance, when they urge such words as these, What will you not be ruled by the Church? will ye not be reconciled to the Church? this availeth much with such, not considering, that the Church is ruled by Gods Word, and what is not according to this Word there is no truth in it; that whatsoever is not grounded on the Word, and commanded by God, is will-worship; that every plant that God hath not planted, shall be plucked up; that things, though done with never so much zeale, yet is not warranted by Gods Word, are unacceptable to God; as you may see *Zach.* 7. The *Jews* had observed a Fast in their 70 years captivity; and now upon their return they sent *Sharezer* and *Regemmelech* to the house of God, to know whether they should continue it, yea or no. But see what followeth v. 5. 6, 7. *when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those* 70

years

years, did ye at all fast to me, even to me &c. It was such a service that God had not appointed them, and they going to press it on people, God owned it not.

So that those that under a pretence of holyness do endeavour to draw souls from the truth, they are those that are the house-creepers: yea, though they preach in never so publick places. For what difference is there between a Mountebanck that mounteth on a stage, and by some tricks of Legerdemain deceiveth the people, and one that doth it in a private place, for it is deceit in both: nay, it is greater impudence in him that doth it publickly, then in him that doth it privately. So is it here.

I shall illustrate it by another similitude. As when one cometh into another mans house with a vizard, he is judged by the man of the house to be such a person; but when he discovers himself, he is found to be another man, then he was thought to be; such a man may be counted a house-creeper, though he comes in openly. So it is here, if persons under the pretence and vizard of holyness, do endeavour to deceive the simple, they may come under this denomination of house-creepers.

Now I shall shew you by several reasons.

1. That it cannot be understood of those that take such places out of necessity and constraint.

2. That it must be meant of such, that under a pretence of holyness do endeavour to draw people from the truth; yea, though it be in never so great a concourse of people.

3. That it cannot be understood of those that take

take such places out of necessity and constraint.

1. Because it is not of choice by them, but necessity that causeth it to be so, therefore they ought not to be charged with evil on this account. Could any one rationally accuse Christ, that he preached secretly and privately, when he withdrew out of *Judea*, and taught *Galilee*, when the *Jewes* sought his life? Was the Apostle *Paul* to be charged with evil for preaching in a house *Acts* 18.6.? when he had before openly reasoned in the Synagogues with the *Jewes*, and they raised mutinies & clamours against him, and drove him from them. Could the Apostles justly be blamed, when they met together in private places, and in the night time? And so the Church in former times when they were persecuted violently by the Heathens, and durst not appear openly. Nay, this truth is so evident, that it is granted themselves, they do even by the Papists affirm that in times of persecution it is meet and necessary for the people of God to meet together in private places.

OB. But some might say, Yes indeed, for Christ and his Apostles and the people of God in such cases to meet together, this is graunted, but what's this to *Schismaticks* and *Hereticks*, these may not do so.

ANS. But I tell you, it is not mens accusations that prove it to be so, persons should consider thus much, that before men can be justly charged as *Schismatical* & *Heretical*, it ought to be made, by clear and solid arguments. But this we know that in all Countreys they that have the greatest power condemn all others. If you go to *Rome*, they will tell you that their superstition is the worship of God. So if you go to *Constantinople*, they will tell you that their *Turcisme* and *Mahometisme* is the right worship of God. But persons ought not to be charged with Heresy, till they are convinced by strength

of

of argument out of Gods Word. It was a Doctour of the Law that telleth us concerning Christ, doth our Law judge any man, before it hath heard him? Nay, you shall see, it was acknowledged by the very heathens *Acts* 25. 5. 16. we should not then that bear the name of Christians, be more unreasonable then the heathens; but take heed of passing such peremptory sentences, before the matter be proved.

2. Because what they do they do in simplicity and sincerity of heart, without any designs of their own 2*Cor.* 4. 12. where the Apostle speaking of himself and of the rest of the faithfull, proveth that they were not of those deceivers, v. 2. *We* saith he, *have renounced the hidden things of darkness, we have not walked in craftiness, we have not handled the word of God deceitfully*, and what is that? It may be this, that when men see, it is best for their interest, then they can plead for the Word but when it is a disadvantage to them in the world, then they can make use of the Word to decry these things that formerly they cried up, these are those whom the Apostle means that handled the Word deceitfully; but we were not of these, and why? because we handl'd the word by manifestation of the truth, the consciences of our hearers can acquit us, that we have endeavour'd to set before them the mind & will of God.

It cannot be understood that these should be the persons here mentioned, because then the Apostle would condemn himself and the practice of all the rest of his fellow Apostles, nay of the Lord his Master. Now it cannot be rationally imagined, that the Apostle *Paul* who was infallibly guided by the blessed Spirit of God, should thus miscarry, and give occasion to his adversaries to triumph, they would have said;

Look

Look here, he condemneth himself, he is one of those that preach in Houses. But then

2. It must be meant of such, that under a pretence of Holiness, do endeavor to draw persons from the truth.

1. It must be understood of these, because these are not the persons that they seem to be, for they come under the Guise of Holiness, pretending much good to the souls of men, but yet aim chiefly at some designes of their own; these are the persons the Apostle speaketh of, and therefore he giveth them this name of House-creepers; so that those who get into the Church of God, (be it either in private or publick places) under a pretence of Holiness, when indeed it is not so, but there is some other design in their entrance, they are such that do creep in, but they do not enter; for they are not such as they were supposed to be. And therefore the Apostle *Jude* saith, *v.* 4. *There are certain men crept in unawares*; the Church was not aware of them, they deceive them by their wiles, and therefore properly such are the House creepers, much like unto the Thief that comes into a Mans House, and is disguised; when he is in he spoils and robs: he may be said to creep in, because though he was let in, yet he was not let in as such an one.

2. Because they purposely choose such places, and out of a design they love secrecy, that they might not be discovered, but carry on their designes the more undiscernably. It is one thing for a man to take secret places out of necessity, and another thing to chuse such places purposely. Now the

Scripture

Scripture telleth us, *that he that is evil hateth the Light.* Hence it is that the Apostle calleth such creepers in another place, deceitfull workers, for they are equivalent 2 *Cor.* 11. 13, 14. *They are false Apostles, deceitfull workers.* But if they are so, how are they then admitted into the Church? oh, saith he, (*transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ*) they make pretences of holyness, and shroud their wolvish nature in a Lambs-skin. And they are such too, whose intent is the same, though it be never so openly, and though they might come in as guides, and leaders of the Church, yet in time they discover themselves to be such as lead out of the way.

So you see who they are that the Apostle speaketh of, under the denomination of house-creepers; I shall now make some application, *USE* 1. This sheweth us the evil of those who are ready to make a bad use of this Scripture, and from this do endeavour to cast reproach on all such that do assemble together out of necessity, and wait on God in his ordinances in private places. What ground have they to make this as their main battery against such? Surely they bewray their ignorance and malice herein. 1. Their ignorance, not rightly considering the Scripture, and that it was the practice of Christ and his Apostles. Were this rightly understood, they might be easily convinced, that there is no ground from Scripture to charge men with evil on this account. Alas Christ, whom they will profess to be their Master, was frequent in this manner of preaching; he taught in a Ship on the Mount, in the House, and several other places. And the Apostles

of Christ, who were the Ministers of Christ, and followed him, and those, whom many of them do profess themselves to be their successours and followers, were frequent in this. And therefore it must needs be a thing which is good and just, that the Word of God doth justifie. Yea, Christ hath left it on record, *Mat.* 18. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together, &c.* It is sad therefore to cast slander and reproach on persons, for doing that which was done by Christ and his Apostles, that were left by him to be guides unto the Church. For the Apostle *Paul* saith, *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.* Now where we have the example of the Apostle *Paul*, concurring with the example of Christ, it ill becomes men to cast slaunders on any; especially when they have been instruments of forcing men to private places. It is very well known, that many in this our Nation, on whom this is injurously charged, have been in as pnblick places as any other, and defired as diligently to attend the work that God called them unto. But when such impositions were put on them, that they could not yeild unto without manifest wrong done unto their consciences; it was their great grief, and the grief of those that had benefit by their Ministry, that their mouthes were stopt. And therefore when it pleased God to put this into the heart of his Majesty to give them this indulgence, they were ready to embrace it with all thankfulness to God and man. So that now their assemblies ought not to be called private but publick, where all may have access, even those that charge them on this account, to take notice

tice what they assert and hold forth.

2. Their malice and bitterness. For you may say, why, this is strange, if the Apostle doth not here condemn all that preach privately, what is the reason that they should be so bitter against it? Why truly friends, that lieth in their own breasts, their reasons are best known to themselves: we are not to judge of secrets, it hath been commonly affirmed, that they in private places have asserted seditious principles. But I may certainly conclude, that those that stick not to utter such injurious slaunders, did they consult with their own consciences, they themselves would clear them on this account. But it is most certain, that the people of God ought not to practice any thing in Gods worship, but what they know is warranted from the Word, and this is the duty of Ministers, to testify and exhort here unto. And though they would suggest disloyalty, yet they themselves when they are crossed in their designs, shew malice and bitterness enough.

The Lord will one day open the eyes of Magistrates to see, that those that are most faithfull to God are most faithfull to men, and those that are most faithfull to God will give men their due, though they do not put them in the place of God.

Use. 2. This should teach people to take heed how they take up slaunderous reports from whomsoever they hear them, but that they be carefull to examine things, and compare them with the Word of God. For you see, the same men that the Apostle calleth creepers into houses (which I shewed you might be meant of such that preach never so openly) the same

of Christ, who were the Ministers of Christ, and followed him, and those, whom many of them do profess themselves to be their successours and followers, were frequent in this. And therefore it must needs be a thing which is good and just, that the Word of God doth justifie. Yea, Christ hath left it on record, *Mat.* 18. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together, &c.* It is sad therefore to cast slander and reproach on persons, for doing that which was done by Christ and his Apostles, that were left by him to be guides unto the Church. For the Apostle *Paul* saith, *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.* Now where we have the example of the Apostle *Paul*, concurring with the example of Christ, it ill becomes men to cast slaunders on any; especially when they have been instruments of forcing men to private places. It is very well known, that many in this our Nation, on whom this is injurously charged, have been in as publick places as any other, and desired as diligently to attend the work that God called them unto. But when such impositions were put on them, that they could not yeild unto without manifest wrong done unto their consciences; it was their great grief, and the grief of those that had benefit by their Ministry, that their mouthes were stopt. And therefore when it pleased God to put this into the heart of his Majesty to give them this indulgence, they were ready to embrace it with all thankfulness to God and man. So that now their assemblies ought not to be called private but publick, where all may have access, even those that charge them on this account, to take notice

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men, I say, *v.*13. He calleth *evil men and seducers.* The Scripture giveth us this rule, *to try all things, and hold fast that which is good.* Some people through their ignorance are offended, and look on it as evil for any to preach the Word, and wait on the Ordinances of God in any places, but in those that are consecrated and set apart for that use, because they read that it was usually at the Temple and Synagogues, they think that it must be there and no where else; and these places are holy places. But these are mistakes arising from ignorance; they do not understand that the Temple was called holy, not because there was any inherent holiness in it self. But

1. Because there were the visible signes of Gods Presence.

2. The Temple was a Figure of Christ, and in that respect was called holy, as you may see by those words of Christ, *Destroy this Temple, and I will build it in three days.*

3. The Temple was a shadow of the Church of God, to shew us, that as in the Temple were the visible signes of Gods Presence, so in the Church of God, which is the spiritual Temple, God dwelleth by his Spirit. But now you may take notice, that since these types and shadows are abolished, there is no such difference of places; for Christ telleth us, *That not at this Mountain, nor yet at* Jerusalem, *but whersoever men call on the Father in spirit and in truth, there he will be found.* Besides, we may observe, that in that time, when the Temple was the Place appointed of God for Publick Worship, and

such

ſuch things under the Law to be done there, which ought not to be done elſewhere (ſo that if there were Holineſs in any place, it was in the Temple) yet in this time Chriſt himſelf preached in ſeveral other places, and ſo did the Apoſtles afterwards. So that it is Mens ignorance to think, that the ſame Duties performed in one place were more holy, then if they were performed in another. and it is a great fault to take up prejudices againſt perſons on this account. Again, there are ſome that are carried forth through raſh and intemperate zeal and bitterneſs of ſpirit, againſt perſons on this account, (and it may be inſtigated by the ſubtilty of others) but if this hath been the Practice of Chriſts Apoſtles, and Chriſt himſelf; and if Chriſt hath promiſed his Preſence, not only in this place, and that place, but whereſoever his people meet together in his Name, then let perſons take heed how they ſet themſelves againſt Chriſt, that they be not found Fighters againſt God: for let them be ſure, what Chriſt alloweth his people in, in that he will juſtifie them; and in what Chriſt hath given them his example, and what he hath promiſed his bleſſing to, there he will ſurely make it good. So that theſe, though in their intemperate zeal, they think, as the Jews did in their oppoſition of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that they did do God good ſervice, yet indeed they are miſtaken; for believe it, thoſe men that have the warrant of Chriſt for what they do, Chriſt will bear them out at that great day of Account; and when men ſhall come to give an Account why they have done ſuch and ſuch things, it

will

will not be a sufficient ground to say because others did so, and they did it out of their zeal; Christ will justifie those that have his Word for their warrant, but how dreadfull will it be for those at the judgment seat of Christ, that are charged with this, that they have opposed his servants for imitating him.

USE. 3. It sheweth the evil of those that cry out so much, and render persons as evil doers, which were themselves and their own ways examined, it would be found who they are, that are most justly to be charged with this in my text. There are some that exclaim against others, as corner Preachers and house Preachers, when if their own ways were well examined, they would hardly clear themselves. Who will be found such at last, either those that are forced into secret places, and notwithstanding are willing that their Doctrines should be put to the tryal; or such that preaching publickly will be offended, when their Doctrines are tryed and examined? Did men seek after secret places, that their Doctrines might be concealed, there were a ground of suspicion, but such as are willing to have their Doctrines tryed, and do not shun the light, they may not properly be called house-creepers. Should men deal with them, as the *Bereans* with the Apostle *Paul*, they would be looked upon as censorious, and men of factious and proud spirits, meerly because they do their duty in examining mens Doctrines by the Word of God, for which the Apostle commendeth

the *Bereans Acts* 17. *that they searched the Scripture to see whether these things were so or no.* Can such be justly charged with Heresy, that are willing that those things which they hold forth should be examined by the Scripture? This is it which they earnestly call for, *To the Law and to the Testimony*, who do you think would most seek a corner, if these things were well weighed and considered, either those that presse things on humane authority; or those that presse things on Divine authority? Those that cannot endure to have their Doctrines tryed do give great ground of suspicion: Persons may pretend much to holyness but this is no part of their holyness to hold forth such things that are not justifiable from the Word of God.

Certainly those persons that are willing to have whatsoever they deliver, examined and tryed by those that have the sharpest spirit of discerning, (alwaies provided that they make the Word of God the standard to try by, and not the Lawes of men) those, I say that are willing to have it so done, are not to be accounted house-creepers. And as for such that have the warrant of Gods Word for what they do, Christ will bear them out, notwithstanding the slaunders and false imputations of men. You know what answer Christ gave the *Pharisees*, when they quarrelled with him concerning his Disciples, because they did not observe such and such traditions

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too

This is that that will bear men out at the great day of Account, when they can plead Gods Command and Institution for what they do. When God putteth men this Question, *Who required this at your hands?* What horrour will seize on their hearts, when they cannot say, Lord, we have thy word for it.

USE 4 Since the Apostle telleth us that such persons are dangerous persons, let us take heed; for it is a matter of great weight and concernment. The Apostle would never have taken so much care to warn us, he would not have set forth the danger of it, had it not been a matter of great moment Let us then take heed, that we are not deceived by such kind of persons.

Qu. But you will say how shall we know them? *ANS.* There is a great ground of suspicion, when in times of peace and liberty, that men may without any danger, or molestation hold forth the truth, when, I say, in such times they will out of choice take private places.

2. Observe what the drift of their doctrine is, 1 *John* 4.1. *Beloved, beleeve not every spirit, but try their spirits*; And how? *By their doctrine.* Consider what it is that their doctrine tendeth to, That which doth derogate from Christ and give unto the Creature; which doth derogate from the grace and glory of Christ, and advance the Creature; that is most corrupt and unsound: when mens doctrine tendeth to this, to set up any thing of man, to exalt mans free-will and works of righteousnes, as if there were something in that, which might ren-

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ders us acceptable unto God, this is very dangerous. When men derogate from Christ, when they do not make Christ the only way to salvation, (for saith the Apostle, *Acts* 4. 12. *Neither is their salvation in any other, for there is none other name, &c.*) When they derogate from the free-grace of God, they are such indeed that are of this kind of creepers, and deceivers that are here spoken of.

Again, look to this, whether their Doctrine be such, that doth hold forth the Lord Jesus Christ to be the sole Governour, and Head of the Church: those that will impose on men such a worship, as is not grounded on the Word, are those that the Apostle speaketh of.

So those persons that do not clearly hold forth the righteousness of Christ, and press men to look off from all other things, and rest on Christ only for life and salvation: that do not press men to live by faith on Christ, are persons that do erre from the truth, and so far as their Doctrine prevaileth they lead from the truth.

So when men take off the affections of people from holyness and puerity of conversation, they are such whose Doctrine is corrupt and unsound; for we ought to press people to manifest the power of faith in a holy and unblameable conversation. Now these things we shhold look unto, and try them by the Word of God, according to that *Is.* 8. 20. and Christ telleth us, that by their fruits we shall know them. Now some fruit of a Minister is his Doctrine.

USE 5. May persons come under this denominati-

on, though never so publick, then let none think themselves safe, this is that which many poor creatures do deceive themselves with; oh, think they, we are safe enough from any seduction and leading aside, we never go to such places. Others run on another extream, they will not go to publick places, they dislike all that is spoken there, but this is evil on the other hand, we are not to judge of truth by places, but as God approveth it, and as it is grounded on the Scripture. For in a great concourse of people we may be led aside from the truth, neither do secret places give us any security, but there we may be led aside from the truth. Let us then bring the Doctrines we hear to the touch stone of Gods Word, and not to reject them, because publique, neither applaud them, meerly because private, and so on the other hand, Those that are so rigorous against private places, what would they have done, if they had lived in the dayes of Christ? they would have rejected Christ and his Doctrine, because he preached on a Mountaine, and in a ship; and if they had lived in the dayes of the Apostles, they would have done the like. A faithfull Minister of Christ, whether private or publick, will endeavour to approve himself to God, by holding forth such things as are consonant and agreeable to the Word of God. Truth may be private, when errour may be publick, as in the dayes of *Ahab*, when some of the Prophets were imprisoned, and some put to death, and *Jezebel* had four hundred Prophets of *Baal* that fed daily at her table, these at that time had the publick

places

places, and so in the dayes of Christ and his Apostles I proceed now to the second observation.

OB. That such persons usually effect their design on such as are either weak and ignorant, not able to discern their corrupt and unsound Doctrine; or such as are under the power of some base lust or lusts, be they men or women; for it may be understood of both sexes, such being by the just judgment of God left to themselves, and so they easily prevail on them. Observe what *Solomon* telleth, *Prov.* 14. 15. *The simple beleeveth every thing, but the prudent looketh well to his goings.*

What doth he mean in that, but this? A man that is simple and void of understanding; you may make him beleeve any thing, if you put a fair glosse and colour upon it, but a man of understanding will lift and try and examine, and see what grounds there are for the Doctrine that is delivered. Of such deceivers the Apostle speaketh, 2. *Pet.* 2. 14. Now here.

1. I shall shew you that they usually effect their designed on persons that are ignorant.

2. That they also effect their design on those that are under the power of some lust or lusts, that are in bondage to some base lusts.

3. That God in his just judgment is pleased sometimes to give over such to be seduced.

1. That their design is usually effected on those that are ignorant of Gods Word.

This you may see if you look into the

Scripture. Who were they among the Children of *Israel*, that the false Prophets did so easily draw aside? you may see they were such that did not know the Lord. *Jer.* 5. 3. 4, 5. Now how came this to pass? They were led aside, and seduced by those false Prophets that *Jeremiah* complaineth of, that did deceive them, and speaking smooth things to them, did harden and confirm them in their evil wayes. Again, you may see how they were drawn in *Jeroboams* time to that grosse and abominable Idolatry; they willingly walked after the Commandment, *Hos.* 5. 11. Now what people were these? the Prophet telleth us *Hos.* 4. 1. *they were such as were without the knowledge of God*, where there is no knowledge of God in a Land, people are easily drawn aside into the most pernicious errours. And what was the reason that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had so many followers, and so few followed Christ? Why the people were ignorant of the Law, and the *Pharisees* by their grosse and corrupt interpretations did deceive them. They were a people that did not know the Law, if they had known the Word of God, Christ and the truths of Christ would have been very precious to them. And what was the cause that in this Nation in former dayes, and other Nations that remain under Popery, they are drawn aside to embrace the most abominable errours, to beleeve things that are so grossly corrupt? It is because they are without the Word, the Scriptures are locked up in an unknown language, and people without the Word do beleeve any thing though never so grosse. Do you think, that absurd and a-

abominable opinion of the Popish Masse would be received, *viz.* That the Bread and Wine is the very Body and Blood of Christ? Also that Crossing themselves with their Fingers is that which will defend them from evil, (and many the like fooliſh opinions) if people were not ignorant of the Word of God.

2. That which I am to shew you further is this. That as ignorant persons are apt to be drawn aside to errours, so likewise those that live under the power of some lust or lusts; Consider that *Jer.* 5. The time that the Prophet *Jeremiah* speaketh of, was a time of looſneſs and prophaneneſs. They did whatſoever was good in their own eyes; v 5. The great men had some knowledge of God, but notwithſtanding they had burſt the yoke, and broken the bonds, they would not be under the power of Gods Word, but would walk according to their own lusts & pleaſures. Likewise that in *Jer.* 44. 16. When the Word that *Jer.* had spoken in the name of the Lord croſſed their lusts, see how stubbornly they answer. As for the VVord which thou haſt spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee. VVhen persons are under the power of any lust, they are in a ready way to be seduced to any thing, though never so corrupt. VVhen men are in love with any sin, and do wilfully retain any lust, they are fit persons for seducers to work upon. And usually such persons with whom the flesh and their own carnal interest prevailes, have been drawn away from following the truth, though they have lived some time under a profession of it, and have had

had some knowledge of it, I say, such persons being overswayed by their lusts, have been turned aside from the truths which they formerly embraced, into the most corrupt and abominable ways. We have had experience of it in this our Nation, when God was pleased to give us peace and plenty, and all that our hearts could desire; how many were there that lived under a Profession of Religion, when Religion was in credit; yet the World having the Mastery of their hearts, how suddenly did those persons miscarry and turn aside, some to one opinion, and some to another? And surely, those who lie in wait to deceive, observe the frame and temper of mens spirits, and order their deceits accordingly.

3. That God in his just judgment giveth such over to be deceived. When once men will indulge themselves in any way of sin; when once they wilfully take up their resolutions, that they will do so and so, though it be expressely contrary to the Word of God; God is pleased to give such over to delusions, 2 *Thes* 2. 10, 11. *For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a Lie.* For what cause? because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Observe, that he doth not say, that they did not receive the truth, but they received not the love of the truth, (*i.e.*) though they had some illuminations, and some knowledge of the truth, yet they had not the love of the truth in their hearts, they did not receive it as from God, and so subject themselves unto it, but their hearts did rise against it.

it, because it crossed their lusts and wills. Now God in his just judgment doth give such over to beleeve a lye. This you may take notice of, that where God is graciously pleased to afford means of knowledge to a people, and that people do either slight it and take little notice of it, or else content themselves in a bare external profession, and do not receive it in love and submission, God is pleased sometime to give such over to be very corrupt indeed, and to embrace errours contrary to those truths that formerly they have received; how many have there been in these times lately past, that have lived under a profession, and seemed very zealous and forward; and yet some corruption swaying their hearts, they have not only fallen off from that fervour in the Ordinances of God, but have looked on them as below their attainments, and as needless things to them, and look on the vaine fancies and conceits that arise in their mindes to be the breathings and moveings of the Spirit of God, and at last, cast off all shew of Religion, and question whether there be any Religion or God, yea or no? Now consider this, what a sad and dreadfull thing is this, to fall into such delusions? and yet how many were there of those whom God was pleased thus to give over, whom one would have thought should never have received such things as these in their hearts? But it hath been evident by sad and wofull experience; and this indeed is not to be admired at; but we may rather marvel that it is not general amongst us, considering how

how we have ſlighted the Gods Word, and denyed the power of it in our lives: God is pleaſed once more to give us this liberty, that we ſhould openly enjoy his Ordinances; Let us remember that God will not ſuffer ſuch mercys to be abuſed. It is high time for us to look to our ſelves, to labour to know the mind and will of God, and knowing it to embrace it with affection and obedience. If we know not the things that belong to our peace in the day of our viſitation, we cannot expect but that the iſſue will be ſad, that God may judicially give men over to a ſpirit of deluſion, that they ſhall run into the moſt dreadfull and erroneous opinions, and all kind of groſſe and idolatrous ſuperſtitions and wickedneſs.

And thus we have cleared the point the grounds follow.

1. Becauſe ignorant perſons, through the ignorance and blindneſs of their underſtandings are not able to judge and try things, and to put difference between things that differ. Men that know not truth from errour, may be eaſily deceived, eſpecially when there is an outward ſhew, and fair gloſſe put upon it. A man may eaſily be overcome in Combate that is diſarmed, or that hath no skill to uſe his armes. Many men live without Gods Word, and though they have it, do not know how to manage this sword of the Spirit, (as it is called by the Apoſtle) they know not how to defend themſelves, nor to offend thoſe that aſſault them. And ſatan (as he is eſpecially ſubtill) ſo his agents have learned this policy of him; when they hear men

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pleading Scripture, and observe their unskilfullnes in the Scriptures; they will plead Scripture too. As now for defence of the Doctrine of merit, by good works, that by these men might be made worthy and obtaine eternal life, this Scripture will be strongly pleaded 1 *Tim.* 6. 18. 19. Look here, say they, it is clear and evident, that we ought to lay up good works in store for our selves, as a good foundation, by virtue of which we may obtain eternal life. But the falshood of this is easily discovered, if we look to the 17. v. Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches. Charge them ~~to~~ plead ~~that~~ they are beleevers, ~~and~~ that they be not high minded, they are apt, since they beleeve in God, it shall be well enough with them. But let them shew their faith by their fruitfullnes in good works, let their faith be manifested in their practice, especially in their readines to releeve the distressed members of Christ; for this is that which Christ will take especiall notice of before the whole world. Wherefore we must not so understand the Apostle, as if by this expression (Laying up in store for themselves) were meant the merit of good works, which give us right to eternal life; but that it might be evident that they are such as have beleeved in Christ, by their fruitfullnes in good works: for where the Spirit of God is in the heart, that Spirit teacheth a beleever to manifest the efficacy of his faith in a godly life and conversation, and in a readines to distribute to the necessitous members of Christ.

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Likewise that place *Col.* 1. 9. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord &c.* Now say they, how should

we walk worthy? and what is our worthineſs but by way of reward? But that which the Apoſtle calls worthineſs, is no more then ſuitableneſs and meetneſs, as *v.* 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be Partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.* Now how are we made meet and worthy? ſurely not by any thing in us, but by Chriſt only, as the next words ſhew, *v.* 13, 14. So that we are not made meet by any works of our own, but we come to be made meet by being cleanſed from our ſins, and clothed in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, by being taken out of *Adam* and implanted into Chriſt; and ſo having received the Spirit of Chriſt, we are made meet to be Partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light. There is a ſuitableneſs in this life to that heavenly and glorious life, that we ſhall live with God for ever. So that this is an abuſe of Scripture. I might ſhew you that life cannot be obtained by works of charity, or by any thing that we can do.

It cannot be by works of charity; for mind that which the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Men may give all their Goods to the poor*, as too many ignorant ſouls have done amongſt the Papiſts. *Nay, men may give their bodies to be burned, but yet if they have not Charity*, (i. e.) if the love of God be not ſhed abroad in their hearts, and the work be not done from a principle of love, it is unacceptable. Mind alſo that which the Apoſtle ſaith, *Eph.* 2. 8, 9. *By grace ye are ſaved through faith, &c.* That is to ſay, works have no hand, no ſhare at all in this great work.

Again, they abuſe that place, *Jam.* 2. 21. *Was not* Abraham *our father juſtified by works?* here to eſtabliſh their Juſtification by works, they bring the

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same Argument that the Apostle brought in another sense. The same way that *Abraham* was justified, the same way are all the faithful justified. But *Abraham* was justified by works, therefore by works are all the faithful justified; But compare this with *Pauls* Epistle to the *Romans. chap* 4. *v.* 2, 3. Abraham *believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* What was counted? why that which *Abraham* believed in and rested on, that is, the righteousness of Christ; but it was before men only, that *Abraham* was justified by works; for we must observe, that the Apostle *Paul* speaketh of Justification before God, and the Apostle *James* of Justification before men; so that in confounding these lieth the subtilty of the adversary. Now on this account they will bring Scripture; & poor people that are ignorant and unskilful in the Word of God, when they hear a man bring Scripture to confirm his errors. Oh say they, he proved it out of Scripture, though it be directly contrary to Gods Word. Likewise they bring that place, *Mat.* 25. 34. *For I was hungry, &c.*

But it is as clear as the Sun, that that place is not to be so understood, as if their works were the cause why Christ did bring them to glory; but those works were mention'd as fruits and effects of faith, which were evident to all; faith it self is secret, and discernable to none but God himself, but works are discernable to all, and therefore it was meet that Christ passing a sentence of Acquittance and Absolution on them should recite it to all, even as a Judge doth recite all that by which the person is absolved; so Christ doth here, shewing that their faith is not a dead faith, but a living faith that did work by love, and carried them to obedience to God, so that this is in respect of their Justification before the whole world.

Again, they will urge Scripture as for the manner of Worſhip, yea, though they have no Word of God for it; yet they will tell you, that their Ceremonies are for the beautifying and adorning of the Church, and for decency in the Worſhip of God; that things are not to be done confuſedly but in order. Whereas indeed thoſe things are moſt orderly that we have Chriſts Word for, and that is moſt decent that Chriſt thinketh moſt fit and decent; for Chriſt, being the Lord of the Houſe, that is decent which he appointeth in the Houſe. But alas! Men when they hear a Scripture produced, though they do not conſider the thing that is there intended, yet are ſoon ſtartled: and hence are people driven into the moſt abominable opinions: As for inſtance, to receive that abhorred Doctrine of the Popiſh Maſs. Why, ſay the Papiſts, doth not Chriſt expreſſely ſay, *This is my Body?* And is not Chriſt the Author of truth? And ought we to queſtion any thing that Chriſt hath ſaid? Whenas Chriſt ſpeaketh figuratively, that the Bread and Wine were figures, and did repreſent ſpiritually the Body and Blood of Chriſt. Chriſt ſpeaketh *Sacramentally*, and by way of a Figure, that is uſual in the *Scriptures*, as ſometimes Chriſt calleth himſelf *A Door*, and *A Vine*. So is Circumciſion called *A Covenant*. And God ſaith, that thoſe that were Circumciſed had broke his Covenant, becauſe Circumciſion was the ſign of the Covenant. So that it cannot be the meaning of Chriſt, that he ſhould intend that the Bread and Wine was his natural Body and Blood, for he was then alive and viſible before his diſciples.

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2. Becauſe their doctrine doth ſuit to the corruption that is in mens hearts. Now thoſe that we are ſpeaking of are not able to ſee the evil, and the ſtrong inclinations of their hearts to that which is evil; but being that which doth ſuit to their corrupt hearts, therefore they receive it. For herein lieth the difference between the Miniſters of Chriſt and falſe teachers: The Miniſters of Chriſt holding forth the truths of Chriſt, have nothing of Man to lay hold on, for corrupt doctrine doth ſuit with corrupt natures: ſuch a doctrine as this is, to extol Juſtification by VVorks, or at leaſt that works have ſome ſhare in it, this doth exceedingly take with corrupt hearts.

Alſo to worſhip God after the Inventions of Men, and to frame a manner of worſhip of our own: this is that which mens hearts are in love withal, they think that by this they deſerve at Gods Hand: and ſuch corrupt doctrines they will drink in as ſweet wine, though in the end they will find it a bitter poiſon.

3. Becauſe they are ignorant, and not able to underſtand the great danger that is in ſuch corrupt doctrine, how much it tendeth to the diſhonour of God, and how greatly it provoketh the Lord. Thoſe that are ignorant do little think, that the ſetting up Mans works in the point of Juſtification, doth exceedingly affront the Divine Majeſty, ſuch ſlight the Love of God in the Gift of his Son: for if we are able to juſtifie our ſelves, what need have we of Chriſt? Chriſt is alſo exceedingly provoked by ſetting up the rags of their own righteouſneſs as Co-Partners with his righteouſneſs, nay, to ſet it above

above the righteousness of Christ, this is that which doth exceedingly provoke him, therefore the Prophet *Isaiah* speaketh to such in the Name of Christ. *This ye shall have at my hands, ye shall lie down in sorrow.* They render the Spirit of God a Liar, who when he hath declared that there is no salvation in any other, but in Christ alone; and that this is the great design of God, that he will magnifie his own grace and abase man, that no flesh shall glory in his sight. I say, they give a lie to the Spirit of God who assert their own righteousness for Justification. Again, they do not know the danger of the corrupt mixture of the devices of men with the institutions of Christ; they know not what danger it is to oppose Christ in his own house, wherof he is the Lord: these men knew it not. Therefore they are advised, *Psal. 2 to kiss the Son.* I tell you, to go to disenthrone Christ, and to rule in his house, is another thing then men are aware of. Thus you see the reason, why ignorant persons are so easily seduced and drawn into errour.

The Reasons why they prevail on such that are in bondage under some lust or lusts may be these.

1. Because they suit their doctrines to the lusts of men, that harden their hearts, and strengthen their hands in their iniquities, that is the reason why corrupt doctrine is embraced by such. The false prophets saw well enough, that *Ahab* had a mind to go up to *Ramoth Gilead*, and they had a minde to please *Ahab*: *Oh*, say they, *Go up and prosper.* So those prophets in *Jeremiah*'s time saw that the people had a good mind to live loosely and prophanely, but they were terrified by the Prophet *Jeremiah*: see how they

they suit their doctrine to their lusts. *Peace shall be unto you: What think ye that God will bring in the Heathen upon you that are his people? that God will destroy his Temple?* And thus it is with the subtile Jesuits, they carry on their ways so, that they foster men in their wickedness, though they have a shew of holiness, yet they know how to indulge men in their sinful lusts and liberties, they have devised ways for it, that according to their principles men may live loosely and licentiously, and yet all may be well enough with them.

2. They usually prevail with such, because such as these have their hearts set on their lusts. As for instance, those whose hearts are set on the world, they are resolved to encrease in the world, they will rather part with Christ then their covetousness. You know how it was with the young man in the Gospel, he would have Christ and his riches too, and so it is with many, they are willing to have Heaven and the world too: but if they must part with one of them, they will part with any thing rather then with their lust. The covetous mans Gold, the ambitious mans vain-glory command their hearts and consciences: they will rather condescend to any thing, though contrary to their own principles, then part with their lusts. And therefore it is no wonder if such persons miscarry.

The reason why God doth give such over to be deluded, is because they reject the truth, as in 2 *Thes.* 2.10. *They received not the love of the truth, they loved not the truth, they embraced it not with their hearts*; it follows, *God shal send them strong delusion.* When men please themselves in any sinful way, and there rest, its a dangerous condition, and God in his just judge-

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ment may give such over to be deceived. You know how it was with *Ahab*: the Prophets told him he should go up and prosper; but when *Micajah* came he set the truth before him, but his lusts liked it not, his pride and ambition and his desire to enlarge his territories caused him to hate *Micajah*. When men have had the truth set before them, and have been convinced thereof, and their understandings somewhat inlightned, and yet they have neglected this light, God may in his just judgment let darkness overspread their understandings, God may say thus to such a soul. Seeing thou wilt not beleeve the truth thou shalt beleeve a lye.

USE 1. This gives us to see the sad condition of all those that are ignorant of Gods Word, that are not able to discern between truth and errour, between the mind of God and the grosse conceits of Satan and his instruments. It must needs be dangerous in these last times, if you consider these Scriptures, *Mat.* 24. 11. *Many false Prophets shall arise and deceive many.* What a sad and dreadfull thing is it, that when false Prophets shall arise, when they shall come and say, here is Christ, and there is Christ, and yet he is not among either? 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. *There shall be such that shall bring in damnable Heresies.* What a sad condition then I say, must such soules be in, that live in such times, when such pernicious seducers are abroad, and they are not able to discern between truth and errour. You would say that that man were in a sad condition, that did set forth some precious things of great value to sell, and a multitude did flock about him with false Coyn, and he were not able to discern between what was good and

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what was false; every one that did see him would say, that man will be utterly undone. So it is here, what a sad condition is this? when men shall come with corrupt and unsound Doctrine, and shall deceive them, and they are not able to discern the precious truths of Christ from those damnable Doctrines? Alas! in what a condition are the ignorant, when men shall come after this manner to them, and tell them, that by their improvement of their natural abilities, and that common light which God hath given them, they shall obtain the love and favour of God, and shall in time come to partake of everlasting life and glory? What a dreadfull thing is this? and yet this goeth down currant with those that doe not know the *Scripture*, when it is manifest that we are dead, and that the light that is in us is grosse darkness, that unless he that is the light of light doth inlighten us by the light of his blessed spirit, we are never able to discern spirituall things. So when men come and tell them that by their good works, by their repentance and works of righteousness they may do away their sins and obtain Gods favour. When men do bring these things with fair glosses and pretences, colouring them with the *Scripture*, they are easily carried away with them. Oh, say they, these are good men, they bring the Word of God for what they say.

Again, if they come with such Doctrine as this, that men ought not to rush presently into the presence of Christ; but they must make friends by some Mediators; as by the Saints that are departed, and by this means they may be interceded for, that they may be heard of him. Oh, say they, this doth not derogate from the honour of Christ, he hath the honour of all we do; But it is rudeness thus to rush immediately into his presence. This carrieth far with ignorant people; for here is a fair pretence and shiew of humility, though it is clear in the Scriptures, that they bring a great deale of dishonour to Christ, when they take away the honour of his Mediatorship; and put it on Saints and Angels. We cannot dishonour Christ more, then when we rob him of the glory of his grace, incouraging us at all times to come to him; and that we should come to the Father in and through the *Son*. It is not for the sake of *Saints* and Angels, but for the sake of Christ alone that we are accepted of God.

Again, when they bring such abominable Doctrine as this, that

we must pray before *Images*. Oh, say they, we pray not to the Images, but these are serviceable to keep our affections on God, whereas they place a holyness in such things, and make that a help which God hath not commanded but expressly forbidden.

And what a sad thing is it, when soules are drawn aside to embrace such impious Doctrine as this; that after the words of consecration, the bread is the very Body of Christ? and argue thus. This is the Word of Christ, that is truth himself, and will you not beleeve Christ? Again, others that are not so horribly grosse have other ways to deceive, pressing men to worship God after another way then that which God hath appointed. *If* you ask them what ground they have for such and such needless ceremonies: Why, say they, this is decency; and we must do all things decently and in order. Alas! how many poor soules are deceived herein, and become zealous contenders for Ceremonies, and more earnest in them then in the things that God hath commanded? Many are so zealous and intemperate, that they will admit of no worship but this, and look on Discenters as factions and seditious that will not yeild unto them.

Again, there is nothing that the nature of man is more apt to be carried aside in, then to advance something of himself, and to set up his own righteousness, and there is no way so subtil as this to deceive poor souls, who will say, Loe this man is for good works, for serving God. Is not this a good man? Friends, it is a good thing to be found in works of righteousness, but if you rest on works of righteousness, as those that may render you acceptable to God, thinking your selves to be justified by them in the sight of God, there is nothing more dangerous; it is a dreadfull thing for a man to establish his own righteousness, it is more dangerous then all the *Images* in the world: see what Christ saith to the *Pharisees*, *Mat.* 21,30. 31. Now what is the meaning of Christ in that Parable? Christ setteth forth those Publicans and Harlots, that walked directly against the commands of God, to be those that said they would not. They are commanded, but they obstinately answer, We will not. Then he speaketh to the *Jewes* that professed obedience and submission to the Law of God. Do you what *I* command you. We will, say they, they had a profession, and they thought to justifie themselves before God. But Christ saith, the Publicans and Harlots go into

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the Kingdome of God before you. And why so? becauſe theſe were convinced as being open profeſſed enemies againſt God, and therefore could not eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, when as the Jewes living under a profeſſion contented themſelves therewith and ſought to advance their own righteouſneſs, and ſo ſubmitted not to the righteouſneſs which is of God. So Luke 18. 11 12. The Phariſee ſaith, *God I thank thee &c. But the Publi an ſtood afar off and ſmote on his breat*, and ſaid, *The Lord be mercyfull to me a ſinner &c. I* cannot ſay, *I* have done this or that, but this I ſay, that without thy mercy I muſt periſh for ever. Oh it is dreadfull to reſt on our own righteouſneſs: I could ſhew you many ways how greatly the ſins of ſuch are increaſed, *It* utterly overthrows the great deſign of God. *It* overthroweth the whole Goſpel, and all that Jeſus Chriſt hath done and ſuffered for. And therfore what a dreadfull thing is it, when poor ſouls are carried away with vain pretences into ſuch an errour? Surely ſuch are in a ſad condition, that are not able to diſcern truth from errour, but are eaſily carried away with fair words, by which deceivers beguile poor ſouls and make a merchandize of them.

Uſe. 2. Let us ſee then the great wickedneſs of the Church of *Rome*, that lock up the Scripture from people, which is the key of knowledge. You ſee clearely, that they are ignorant perſons for whom deceivers lay their baits, and that the ignorant are moſt drawn away by ſeducers. They fit and prepare people to be deceived that keep Gods Word from them What an abominable thing is that, and how contrary to the Scriptures, that ignorance is the mother of devotion? *It* is directly contrary to the Scriptures. We find that this is the complaint of God, *My people periſh for want of knowledge.* Surely it is very groſſe to keep people from the knowledge of the Scriptures, and to perſwade them to reſt meerly on the words of their teachers And what is this but to enſnare them, and keep them in bondage continually? And what do they? and how nearely do they follow theſe wretches that incourage people in their ignorance, and diſcourage them from reading the Scripture telling them that they are to follow their own imployments, & that God expecteth not ſuch at their hands, but that which is required of them is to beleeve their Miniſters? But ſurely this was not ſpoken to the Miniſters, but to the people,

1 Joh. 4. 1, *Beleeve not every spirit, but try the spirits &c.* This should be on every ones spirit to labour after such a measure of knowledge; that they may be able to try such things as are presented to them, and not to receive those things which are contrary to the mind and will of God.

Use 3. What cause have we to bless God in this Nation that have had free liberty of Gods Word? it hath not been locked up to us. Oh that we had wisdom rightly to improve this mercy; that the Scripture might not be to us as a price put into the hands of fools. Let us be diligent to read and meditate on the Word of God. The Scripture saith, *Blessed are they that read the Word of this Prophecy.* We find, that all were commanded to read in the book of the law continually; none was exempted, not so much as the King himself. And as we should read the Scripture, so we should meditate on it, that is the blessed man indeed that doth meditate on Gods Word day and night. Also we should be instant in prayer, that God would open our eyes to see the marvellous things of his law, we should embrace all opportunities that God gives us to wait on him in his Ordinances, that we might receive instruction, and be built up in the faith. *Its* sad to be in those places where ~~is we live, that~~ there is ~~should be~~ such grosse ignorance and darkness in mens understandings. And how just is it with God to give such over to be deceived that are of a dull and careless frame of spirit? For the Lords sake consider seriously of it, and put it to your own soules, what opportunities have you omitted wherein you might have attended on Gods Ordinances? How negligent have you been in reading Gods Word? How justly might God give you over to the grossest delusions, that have made so light of so precious a word, wherein the wisdom of God, the grace and love of God so eminently appears, wherein there is such incouragement for poor ignorant souls, and for those that find themselves in a state of misery and unbeleif to come in and beleeve? And see what the *Psalmist* telleth us, *Ps.* 19. 7. *The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure makeing wise the simple.* Should such fools be pittied that are fools willingly? Now all that have Gods Word do make themselves fools in rejecting the means that God hath afforded to make them wise. See what *David* saith *Ps.* 119. *Thy Word is a light to my waies, and a lanthorn to my paths.* Consider that God hath promised

mised to give to his people a heart that shall know him. Who knoweth, how God may in the use of his Ordinances set home by the power of his spirit a word that may soften a hard heart, and humble a proud heart; This is the character of Gods people that they are a wise understanding people *If* then we would be be of the number of Gods people, let us endeavour after wisdom by the improvement of those means that God hath afforded unto us.

Use 4. *Is* it so that those that live under the power of lusts are the persons that are deceived by seducers? Then consider what enemies they are to their own soules, that do ensnare themselves under the power of any lust? they betray themselves, and lay themselves open to adversaries. There is nothing so dangerous to a soul as that is, that sets a soul in a ready way to be deceived and undone by those that ly in wait to beguile him. We are apt to say of some special sins that our hearts are much set upon, this is but a little one: when if we did well consider and weigh all circumstances, we should find that there is no sin little, though there are som sins greater then other som; yet no sin can be cal'd little. Now observe those that make it their business to deceive mens souls do the frame of mens spirits, and they know how to fit their baits to mens inclinations. Deceivers are like fishers that have for their several sorts of Fishes their several baits; when they have to do with men whose hearts are set on the world, they know how to deal with them there; and when they are lifted up with pride and ambition, they know how to lay a bait to catch them there; and when they see that their hearts are filled with the carnal pleasures of the world, they know how to lay their baits accordingly. And alas! how many are there that have lived under a profession of religion, and yet by giving their hearts an indulgence and toleration in some lusts, they have betrayed their souls into the hands of their adversaries that ly in wait to deceive them? And these subtile deceivers, though they fall not on a man to beat him suddenly from that which he owneth, yet they intangle his affections till his heart by degrees is taken off, and he is ensnared by them, and comes at length to embrace such abominable opinions, which if they had been presented to him at the first, he would have fled from them as from a Serpent. The Lord graunt that every one of us may consider of it, for if we regard iniquity in our hearts, and prostitute our consciences to the pleasures of our lus-

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lusts, God may justly suffer us to be seduced: wherefore let us make it our business to purge out every iniquity lest it be our ruine.

USE 5. Let us not wonder then, that in such times as we live in there should be such declensions from the Ways of God. When we see times, in which all manner of looseness and prophaneness reigns, and is not suppressed; it is no wonder, if those that lie in wait to deceive do prosper in their designes; though I do not mean of such that are sometimes drawn aside and overcome by their lusts; for God may suffer his precious ones to be led aside for a season, but he restoreth them again: but when *I* say, [such that are under the power of lust] *I* mean, of such that are ordinarily over-ruled by their lusts, and of that which is the usual course by which corrupt persons prevail on such. And indeed it is not strange that they prevail on them. As I hinted to you out of *Jeremiah*, concerning that gross Idolatry that was among the people, it was no wonder that the Prophets prophesying lies should prevail on them, for there was horrible prophaneness and wickedness amongst them, when corrupt men shall frame such a Religion as shall suit with mens lusts, it is not strange that such men should yield unto them, whose hearts are set on their lusts. It is not strange, that Popery should so exceedingly prevail, when they have framed such corrupt ways, that men may go on cheerfully in the satisfaction of their lusts. When men shall be told that some sins are no sins, and some sins are venial, and greater sins may be done away by enduring some corporal punishments, which also it is in the Power of the Priest to mitigate; and that if they die in their sins, they may by enduring some punishment in Purgatory be purged from their sins, and afterwards received to glory; and that it is in the Popes Power to deliver them from these pains. If these things be well considered, we may not wonder that men are so easily drawn aside to gross Popish superstitions. Where Christ telleth us of *false teachers*, he telleth us also, *that iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax old.*

USE 6. This should teach us to watch our hearts, and to take especial notice of the corrupt inclinations. Did we devise a way to entangle our selves, and ensnare our own souls, we could

could not find a readier way then to follow the lustings of our own hearts. When once the heart is set on evil, it taketh offence at the truth, especially at such truths that give a wound to its beloved sins *Herod heard* John Baptist *gladly*; but when he toucheth him in his beloved sin, he heareth him no more. So there are many that make a Profession of Religion, who, when they come to be touched in their beloved sins, cannot digest such plain dealing, and by this means their affections do abate to Religion, and at last they fall off, and are willing to joyn in any way that may indulge them in their lusts. Therefore that word of *Solomon* is not unsuitable, *Keep thy heart with all diligence, &c.* We must see that we do not allow our selves in any evil, one sin bringeth in another, and frequency of sinning causeth deadnesse of heart, and deadnesse of heart taketh off the Soul from the Ordinances of God, till by degrees it cometh to have bitterneſse of spirit, and deadly enmity against those that go on in the practice of those things that are allowable by the Word of God. We have seen sad examples of this kind in these our days, how many have been ensnared by the world, rather then they would lose their honour and esteem with men, they leave the honour that Christ hath tendered to them. Let us not then be such enemies to our own souls.

USE 7 What cause have such that have been preserved from Apostacy and Seduction, to acknowledge the infinite goodnesse of God unto them? there is none of us, but if we would make a diligent search into our own hearts, our Consciences will tell us, that since we have come to the knowledge of the truth, we have sinned against our own light; we have done those things which our Consciences have told us we should not have done; how might God have suffered us to be deceived and carried aside to those ways that lead to eternal destruction? It is sad to look abroad in the world, and to see how many in these times have been carried aside from the Truths of God, by that corrupt and abominable errour of Popish Merit, to establish their own Righteousnesse; and some have been carried aside to the same evil under the pretence of the improvement of their natural parts and abilities, and have set up their own work and denied Christ? How many have despised the Ordinances of God? How many have fallen from their Profession to downright Atheism?

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That it is not so with us is because God hath preserved us and watched over us, how should this engage our hearts to that God that hath made his Word good to us, in keeping us to himself by his mighty power through faith.

And again, let us not wonder that many should be drawn to this opinion, and that opinion; but rather wonder that to this day we have not been so deceived. If God should leave us and withdraw from any of us, if God should say to any soul here, go on in thy own way, and beleeve what thou wilt, and embrace whatever thy heart is set upon; what opinion is there? Nay what damnable Heresy is there? that we should not run into. It is the Lord that keeps us, or else we should have perished. Oh what cause hath every soul that hath been kept in the truth to bless God, that hath given them his spirit to lead them in the truth? It is not our parts, nor wisdom, nor any thing in us that preserveth us from errour; he that beguiled *Adam* in his innocency might easily beguile us, that have so much darkness in our understandings, impurity in our affections, and perverseness in our our wills. Our soules bless the Lord, and acknowledge that it is of his infinite grace and mercy to us that we have been preserved. We have cause to say as the *Psalmist* did, *Not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.* this should be as a bond in our spirits to walk with God. The goodness of God should have that effect on us, as it had on *Jacob*, when God appeared to him in *Bethel*, it is said he lifted up his feet and went on his way. So it should be with us, it should make us lift up our feet and walk on in the waies of the Lord:

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